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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000162

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TAGS: PREL UNSC LE IR

SUBJECT: UNSC CONDEMNS TERRORIST BOMBINGS IN IRAN, LEBANON
AND IRAQ AND ASKS WHICH ATTACKS MERIT SC STATEMENTS

REF: USUN 150

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 7.

¶12. (C) Summary and comment. The UN Security Council approved a press statement condemning two bus bombings in Lebanon on February 13, another press statement condemning the bombing of a bus carrying Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) personnel in Iran on February 15, and a statement on February 22 condemning recent terrorist attacks in Iraq (reftel). The deliberations on Lebanon and Iran brought to the fore simmering tensions over a perceived "double-standard" in the Council's quick reaction to requests from Lebanon and allegations of slow movement or inaction on other important issues in the Middle East. During U.S.-initiated consultations on the Iraq statement, some delegations made unfavorable comments about U.S. policy in Iraq and argued that the Council ought to become more involved in Iraq. The debate on all three issues also begged the question of what criteria the Council should use to determine which terrorist attacks to condemn and what format (e.g., Presidential Statement, press statement) is preferable. Of note, new members, particularly Panama, Italy, Indonesia, and South Africa, argued the UNSC must not act selectively in its condemnations of terror. As we work to advance our policy goals in the Security Council -- including by better targeting and rationalizing the Council's workload to minimize any debasing of Council products -- we will need to navigate around these tensions and define benchmarks to strengthen our rationale for action or inaction. End Summary and comment.

Council Condemns Bus Bombing in Lebanon...

¶13. (SBU) In response to a French initiative supported by the U.S. and the UK, the Council approved a press statement on February 13 condemning the two bus bombings that had occurred near Beirut earlier that day. The French had originally proposed that the Council adopt a Presidential Statement (PRST) given the seriousness of the attacks and the need to send a clear signal of the UNSC's support for the government of Lebanon, but Russia, Indonesia, China, and Qatar insisted that a PRST would have to be referred back to capitals for review. The French therefore accepted the milder form to gain agreement on the spot. The Panamanian PR, while announcing that he would not block consensus, complained that the Council should not be asked to approve statements in such haste -- especially those that contain "so many adjectives" to describe such a sensitive situation. (Note: By this he meant that the text was politicized. End Note.) South African PR Kumalo supported the Panamanian PR and asked why the Council was constantly called on to respond so quickly to

events in Lebanon while it seemed to take its time to deal with other issues.

...Which Prompts Calls for Quick Action on Iran

¶4. (C) On February 15, the Council adopted a press statement introduced by Russia at the behest of the Iranian delegation that condemned the February 14 attack on a bus in Zahedan, Iran, that killed at least 18 Revolutionary Guard Corps members and wounded many more. During consultations on the statement, China, Qatar, Panama, Indonesia, South Africa, Italy, and Russia asserted that the Council had to respond as quickly to the Zahedan bombing as it had to the bombing in Lebanon two days earlier and that the UNSC could not appear selective in the terrorist attacks it condemned. The British and French delegations agreed, and argued that the Council ought to respond to all requests from countries seeking such statements. Despite expressing concerns about the Council pronouncing itself on every terrorist attack, Panamanian PR Arias urged the Council to approve the statement in the interest of equal treatment and at one point even appealed directly to the U.S. not to block the text.

¶5. (C) After noting the irony of the Iranian Government asking the Council to condemn a terrorist attack in Zahedan while the same government refused to recognize the authority of the UNSC in the nuclear file, Ambassador Wolff expressed the expectation that the Iranian request signaled a change in that country's approach to the Council. He challenged the Council to agree that if this statement were approved, that delegations would also support UNSC condemnations of terrorist attacks against Israel, even if they claim the lives of soldiers, for example, or of terrorist attacks in

USUN NEW Y 00000162 002 OF 002

Iraq. After clarifying that Russia believed attacks against soldiers constitute terrorism if the troops are not involved in a military conflict, Russian PR Churkin agreed that the Council should condemn terrorist attacks in Israel or Iraq if those Governments make such a request. South African PR Kumalo agreed with Churkin and said the Council should condemn bus bombings in Israel.

...And a U.S. Push to Condemn Attacks in Iraq

¶6. (SBU) Following the statements on Iran and Lebanon, USUN introduced and the Council approved a statement on February 22 condemning recent terrorist attacks in Iraq, including the February 21 chlorine gas attack in Baghdad (reftel). Several delegations used the debate to raise questions about U.S. policy in Iraq, with the Russian PR arguing for a timeline for the withdrawal of international forces and the Italian and other delegations pressing for language on national reconciliation. A number of delegations also argued that Council statements should be tied to specific attacks rather than to terrorist attacks in general, while others suggested that a press statement was an insufficient response to the grave security situation in Iraq.

Action Request: Which Terror Attacks to Condemn?

¶7. (C) USUN requests suggested Department guidance on criteria to determine which terrorist attacks the Council should condemn and which vehicles (press statements or PRSTs) to use to express these condemnations. In developing this guidance, it might be useful to consider factors such as whether the targets were military or civilian, if military targets were engaged in hostilities at the time, and whether the Council has received a request from the concerned government. We should also be mindful that embracing criteria that are either too broad might lead to a flood of condemnations that ultimately weaken the currency of such statements or tie our hands in situations in which we would

prefer that the Council also act or possibly remain silent.
WOLFF